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SUBJECT: MANSOUR HUMAN RIGHTS LEAD SAYS KILLINGS HAVE
DECREASED IN SOME NEIGHBORHOODS BUT STILL BAD OVERALL

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Robert S. Ford, for Re
asons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Hussein Al-Bayati, the human rights lead for the Mansour District Advisory Council (DAC), told PolOffs May 24 that the Baghdad neighborhoods of Khadra, Ghazaliya, and Hatin have experienced a marked decrease in reported extrajudicial killings (EJK) over the past month. Based on conversations with neighborhood residents, district council members, and Iraqi security forces, he estimated over a 50 percent decrease in EJKs in those areas. While attributing this decrease to a greater presence of Iraqi Army (IA) checkpoints and T-wall installations, he qualified his assessment by adding that these areas were still dangerous.

¶2. (C) Al-Bayati said the demographics of the killings varied extensively by neighborhood unit in Mansour, but he added that Shia and Sunni residents suffered equally. He estimated that in Ameriyah, Ghazaliah, Khadra, and Hatin, more than 70 percent of those killed were Shia. In Washosh and Mutanib, he estimated a similar percentage for Sunnis. In al-Adil, he said it was 50-50. He alleged that JAM were responsible for the Sunni killings and that insurgents were responsible for Shia killings.

¶3. (C) The unifying trend in these assassinations, al-Bayati claimed, is the well-thought out manner in which the victims are targeted. Al-Bayati told PolOffs that the perpetrators of these crimes shadow the victims extensively before action is taken. According to al-Bayati's assessment, "the time they go to lunch, the route they take to work, their names and any other details are very well known by killers on both sides". The victims, primarily targeted for their affiliations, are also marked based on their visibility and accessibility. For example, in many neighborhoods in Mansour, he said, butchers, bakers, barbers and trash collectors are open-season targets.

¶4. (C) When asked about the impact of the new national government on security, al-Bayati expressed mild optimism for the effect the new set of government officials would have on security and the lessening of human rights abuses. He stated that he knew Prime Minister Maliki personally and thought him to be an excellent choice who will be able to get things done. More than anything, he pointed to the presence of Iraqi Army personnel as the true impetus for positive change. He said the IA had been partnered with MoI personnel in April and that the partnership has so far been successful.

¶5. (C) Comment: Al-Bayati does not keep hard statistics on EJKs and other types of human rights abuses, so these estimates should be taken judiciously. However, his information is developed through interaction with neighborhood DACs, neighborhood residents and local security, and therefore has at least some grain of credibility.

Al-Bayati appears to have a degree of objectivity that is often not shared by most Iraqi politicians. A member of the (Sunni) Iraqi Islamic Party, he nonetheless acknowledged both Sunni and Shia involvement in extrajudicial killings. His praise for the Iraqi Army is often echoed by other Baghdad residents, who do not look at the police in the same way. Al-Bayati is a lawyer by training and previously held the position of head of the Mansour DAC legal committee. End Comment.

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